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Approved For Release 2005/06/22 : CIA-RDP85T00875R002000190022-2

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CIA/DIV/STAFF MEM / 37-61

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

17 July 1961

STAFF MEMORANDUM 37-61 (Internal ONE Working Paper - CIA
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SUBJECT: The Congo Situation

1. Several events have led to a recent upsurge of political tension in the Congo this week after several months of slow progress toward some kind of political detente and order. A USSR diplomatic mission is now in Stanleyville, and the establishment of a Soviet Embassy is reported imminent. Meanwhile, a delegation of some 64 Stanleyville representatives has arrived in Leopoldville to participate in the reopening of parliament following a recent agreement between the Leopoldville and Stanleyville regimes. However, the opening of parliament is clouded by the Katanga Government's refusal to send its representatives to Leopoldville. President Tshombe has said that he will decide today whether Katanga deputies will attend the parliamentary session.

2. Many months of pressure and cajoling on the part of Congolese moderates, the UN, and the West finally resulted in a

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decision by President Kasavubu to reconvene the Parliament as a first step in making the Congo a going concern, and to come to terms with the dangerous threat to peace in Africa posed by Antoine Gizenga's leftist-backed breakaway regime in Stanleyville. It was recognized that there was some political danger in convening parliament, and that without the Katanga deputies there was at least some chance that Gizenga might come to dominate the parliament. On the other hand, it was believed that a refusal by Gizenga to participate in a parliamentary regime -- guaranteed by the UN -- would probably diminish his international standing. On 19 June Gizenga, probably sensing a weakened position at home, agreed to allow his deputies to participate in the parliament.

3. The Leopoldville-Stanleyville agreement resulted in a hectic round of political activity, with the moderates attempting to pull together some kind of coalition which would allow the Gizenga forces face-saving participation in a government, but would still allow President Kasavubu and his forces to retain most of the power. After considerable maneuvering, it became increasingly apparent that control of parliament was much less certain without the Katanga deputies. Tshombe, Katanga's

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strongman, engaged in a struggle to reassert fully his power in Katanga, reneged on an earlier promise (made under some duress while a "prisoner" of the Leopoldville forces) to cooperate with Leopoldville, and has thus far refused to allow the Conakat Party delegates to attend parliament. As a result, the moderates, the UN and the West are faced by the possibility of a Gizenga-dominated parliament, or of a political defeat brought about by continued delay in formulation of a new Congo government with a greater degree of legality and, hence, international standing.

4. Other disruptive elements are at work on the scene. Army Commander Mobutu, probably encouraged and financed by Tshombe, is said to be growing restive at continued political inaction, and may initiate another coup which might lead to disastrous international consequences. There is foot-dragging and political jockeying among the Leopoldville moderates, and the prospect of effective political cooperation among their largely tribal-oriented groups varies from day to day. Influential elements in Katanga, backed by large Belgian business firms, still oppose association with Leopoldville. The parliament itself is an uncertain body, and, apart from the Katanga group,

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much will depend upon 34 deputies and 19 senators whose positions are unknown.

5. Even if parliament meets (with or without Tshombe's deputies), the Congo's difficulties are unlikely to end soon. Although Gizenga has suffered some setbacks at home, it is unlikely that his relatively disciplined voting bloc will participate in parliamentary deliberations as a constructive force. Instead, he will probably attempt to sow dissension in the ranks of the moderates, while making a play to gain power for himself -- probably as Prime Minister. Should he fail in his attempt, he will probably retreat to Stanleyville and resort to force if necessary to maintain his position.

6. Gizenga has already set the stage for his Stanleyville fallback position despite his troubles there. He has run into political opposition from the Orientale provincial government and elsewhere, and faces serious economic problems including shortages of funds and fuel. Moreover, on the international scene, Gizenga has been critical of the Bloc and the radical African states for their inability to deliver effective material assistance. in Gizenga would be/more difficulty should his forces suffer a parliamentary defeat or should he order his parliamentarians

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to stage a walkout. However, by his seeming willingness to come to terms with Leopoldville, Gizonga has managed to put some pressure on the Bloc. The USSR and Czechoslovakia have responded with diplomatic missions looking to closer and more effective relations. New Bloc diplomatic recognition, added to that already extended by radical African states, would enable Gizonga to counter at least some of his problems. Meanwhile, although the UN would have sustained a blow to its prestige, it is unlikely that Secretary General Hammarskjold would be disposed to use the UN security force to oust Gizonga.

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